

Bacterial Infections and the Flu

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We recently returned from a trip to find that a close friend had died in the week we were gone. From healthy to dead in a week is what we are sometimes seeing with the current flu. These deaths are reported to be associated with bacterial infections that appear only as the flu. Most of them, like the epidemic in 1918 and '19, get into the lungs and cause pneumonia.

Most of them are also caused by bacteria from the nose. Dr. Daniel Chertow, from the National Institutes of Health, has recently written about this problem in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. (Jan 13, 2013) He describes a case very much like our friend and states:

Bacterial coinfection complicated nearly all influenza deaths in 1918 and up to 34% of 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1) infections managed in intensive care units worldwide. More than 65,000 deaths due to influenza and pneumonia occur annually in the United States. Data from 683 critically ill patients with 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1) infection admitted to 35 intensive care units in the United States reveal that bacterial coinfection commonly occurs within the first 6 days of influenza infection, presents similarly to influenza infection alone, and is associated with an increased risk of death. Pathogens that colonize the nasopharynx including *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, and *Streptococcus pyogenes* are most commonly isolated. Complex viral, bacterial, and host factors contribute to the pathogenesis of coinfection. Reductions in morbidity and mortality are dependent on prevention with available vaccines, as well as early diagnosis and treatment.

What this means to me and others familiar with what xylitol does is that two of these deadly bacteria are easily washed away by xylitol because it interferes with their ability to hold on, and the other is more easily washed out by the increased water brought into the nose by the xylitol. Had our friend and the other 65,000 people who died from this problem been using xylitol regularly to wash their noses (like every time they washed their hands) most of them would likely still be here.